

I. Introduction

BACKGROUND

The Arizona Judicial Branch consists of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the Superior Court, Justice of the Peace Courts, and Municipal Courts. The Supreme Court has administrative supervision over all courts in the state and the authority to make rules governing all procedural matters in any court.

The Arizona Judicial Council (AJC), established in 1990, assists the Supreme Court in developing and implementing policies that will provide central direction for court management, consistency in court operations, and coordination of services within the courts. Under the direction of the Chief Justice, the Administrative Office of the Courts provides the necessary support for the supervision and administration of all courts.

The Commission on Technology (COT), under whose auspices the Judicial Branch Information Technology Strategic Plan is developed, is a standing committee of the Arizona Judicial Council. The Commission plays both an advisory and a review role with respect to statewide technology policies, standards, and applications. The Information Technology Division (ITD) of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) staffs the Commission and its subcommittees, and typically provides the majority of technical resources for statewide technology projects.

Both the AJC and the COT are statewide, multi-disciplinary, governance groups having representation from all levels of the judicial branch, as well as the executive branch, the State Bar, local government, the legal community, and the general public.

The Arizona Judicial Branch has turned to technology as an important means to meet its goal to provide an independent, accessible, and integrated judicial system in accordance with constitutional mandates, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are many compelling reasons that the court is looking to automation to meet today's demands for information and efficient processing. The following strategic plan maps out the future direction of Arizona's Judiciary in information technology architecture and projects for the three-year period including Fiscal Years 2022 through 2024.

The Arizona Judicial Branch is proud of its accomplishments in information technology over the 30 years since statewide efforts towards technology planning and statewide systems and standards began in earnest.

- Most juvenile court-related functions are automated on JOLTSaz and integrated with a youth assessment tool to implement evidence-based practices. Work continues on expanding the functionality of JOLTSaz and collecting all juvenile case information into a single, statewide repository.
- All superior courts are automated using the same, centrally supported and managed system, AJACS, apart from the high-volume courts in Maricopa and Pima counties. AJACS has also been implemented in more than 130 justice and municipal courts throughout the state. Only a handful of limited jurisdiction courts continue to use legacy case management systems.
- Adult probation offices in all 15 counties continue to use the same statewide reporting and statistical data collection system and a second-generation adult probation tracking system. APETS, initially developed and implemented in Maricopa County, placing all adult probation information within a single database.
- A training program to support common court “best practices” processes and procedures has been developed and implemented. It addresses the automation training needs of the courts, providing both partial funding to staff a training function in each county court system and also statewide training programs.

- A centralized repository of all court protective orders is available for query by law enforcement. A similar path is continuing to be pursued for arrest warrants and mental health orders throughout the state.
- Public access to case information consolidated from 155 Arizona courts is available via a central Internet location for lookup of cases by name or case number. In addition, certain courts in the state provide Internet access to information about cases within their jurisdiction. A subscription feature also exists for public case information. Public access to case-related documents online is now available by subscription, to the extent allowed by court rule.
- Courts continue digitizing paper filings using electronic document management systems. Electronic document management is a key enabler for electronic case filing. The AOC operates a central document repository for both public access and enhancing courts' business continuity. Eleven superior court clerks and more than 100 smaller, limited jurisdiction courts are employing the central electronic document management system (EDMS) housed at the AOC, enabling their paper documents to be disposed of after quality assurance steps have been taken. Several prominent limited jurisdiction courts have implemented standalone electronic document management systems, as well.
- As the digital tipping point is reached, judges in all superior court locations now have the tools necessary to track and perform their vital work within an all-digital ecosystem, including the ability to e-file orders with the clerk.

The ***Fiscal Year 2021 Accomplishments*** section provides a detailed listing of last year's major information technology accomplishments.

The demands of the public to access court records, information sharing among the courts and other criminal justice agencies, plus the sheer volume and complexity of justice transactions are focusing the Judiciary on rapidly modernizing the courts' use of technology. The court continues addressing technology-hostile court rules and inconsistent local practices, especially in the arena of electronic case filing/access. In the wake of drastically reduced revenues, Court leadership continues to rely on technology to improve access to justice and the effectiveness of court business processes as well as to improve the entire criminal justice system.

The Arizona Judicial Branch recognizes its role in the enhancement of the criminal justice system as a whole in the state. While much progress has been made within each criminal justice function to improve operational effectiveness, it is now widely acknowledged that criminal justice agencies must collaborate to bring about much needed systemic improvements. The first project to address the justice integration initiative was the electronic reporting of criminal dispositions to the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Related projects are planned to improve the exchange of accurate data among the various criminal justice functions before submittal to the common criminal justice history files. Being central to the criminal justice system, the courts play a critical part in the successful accomplishment of local integration initiatives.

Electronic Document Management (EDM), which includes electronic filing, document imaging, and the integration of documents with other applications, remains an important initiative of the chief justice. An EDM project addresses both back- and front-office functions. Without a basic infrastructure made up of document repositories, software to manage them, and sufficient network bandwidth to support document transmissions, courts cannot accept electronic filings from other agencies. Now that the basic infrastructure is in place, along with a systemic analysis to alter existing document handling and filing processes, courts are able to respond to requests to accept electronic filings from the law enforcement, prosecution, and legal communities, including digital evidence. Efforts continue to enable process and technology changes that provide judicial officers at all levels of court with access to electronic documents, evidence, and data for decision making from the bench, in chambers, and from remote locations.

An implementation project is addressing replacement of the one remaining first-generation case management system, Appellation, long at the end of the automation life cycle. Plans are being made to replace the statewide adult probation tracking system now over 20 years old. Next-generation systems significantly reduce the level of clerical effort needed for data entry and update functions by enabling automated exchange of data among criminal justice agencies. Rather than placing all functionality within a single enterprise system controlled by the court, the integration model being pursued calls for loosely coupling disparate systems using defined standards for data exchange like GJXML and the NIEM as well as an

enterprise service bus (ESB) for transaction-based services. A managed services layer provides added flexibility for integration and data sharing along with added protection to back-end applications.

The 2022-2024 Information Technology (IT) Plan continues to support the core functionality of the existing statewide applications. Having completed its statewide rollout, the AJACS CMS continues to be maintained and enhanced to address legislated changes as well as critical business needs raised by using courts. It forms the foundation of trial court automation in Arizona. The legacy AZTEC case management system and related infrastructure will be retired once its closed case data is accessible to courts via a supported application.

The Arizona Judicial Branch's IT Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024 offers a strategic direction for the information technology resources and activities in the Judiciary. It results from a formal planning process, which began with updates to various IT plans at the county level. These supporting plans are included in Appendix D. Rural courts' plans continue to be updated only every other year, following a decision by the Commission on Technology over a decade ago.

This plan first presents the Judiciary's business strategic initiatives. Those initiatives are defined in Sections III and IV followed by the IT initiatives supporting them.

The IT strategic initiatives are:

- Promote a Systemic Thinking Approach to Problem Solving with Technology
- Provide Infrastructure that Facilitates Effective Communication and Integration
- Enhance Security and Disaster Recovery to Protect Court Technology-Related Assets and the Reputation of the Judiciary
- Standardize Processes and Solutions to Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Complete and Enhance Second-Generation Statewide Automation Projects
- Improve Data Exchange, Communications, and Public Access
- Digitize the Court Environment
- Provide Divisions of the Administrative Office of the Courts Solutions for Internal Support

Finally, 25 or so major IT strategic projects are outlined.

The Commission on Technology and its subcommittees provide a strong, active force for directing technology efforts and funding. Its members deserve special thanks for the fine job they are doing in providing leadership in technology to the Arizona Judicial Branch. Members of Commission on Technology and its standing subcommittees, Court Automation Coordinating Committee, the Technical Advisory Council, and the Probation Automation Coordinating Committee are provided below.

COMMISSION ON TECHNOLOGY (COT) 2020-2021 MEMBERSHIP LIST

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<p>CHRISTINE PEARSON Court Administrator Prescott Consolidated Court</p>	<p>MARC RUSSELL Deputy Clerk of Superior Court Superior Court in Navajo County</p>
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